

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

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### CHAPTER XXIV.

ONE after another the dancers began to stream into the little room, attracted by its look of cool dimness. Madge found herself overwhelmed with compliments on the taste she had displayed in the decoration of her boudoir.

"There is such a delightful air of mystery through the arrangement of the light," said one.

"And the position of the mirror is most effective," said another.

Madge gave back but short and absent answers in acknowledgement of the compliments; her eyes were fixed on the white, startled face of the girl who stood with clasped hands, staring blankly into the dim mirror.

"Take me out of this room," Madge heard her say to Lance, in low, unnatural tones. "I am tired, I have danced too long."

Lance was startled by the tone in which these words were uttered. It brought back to him the stony, tuneless voice in which, in the midst of the crashing storm, she had told him that there were some whom not poison, nor flood, nor fire could harm.

He made way for her through the crush, thence through the ball-room into the outer hall. Here there was of necessity more air and space—save for an occasional servant passing they had it all to themselves.

"You are feeling faint with the heat?" he asked anxiously. "Come outside on

the terrace for a few minutes—it's a glorious night—stay, let me get you a cloak."

All sorts of cross lights met here in this vestibule; a stream of light poured forth from the inner hall, where the strains of the inspiring military band proclaimed that dancing had recommenced; yellow and pink light from the lamps on the staircase in a bewildering stream met this and crossed it, and through the high windows, one on either side of the hall-door, a little beyond this glare, there fell on the tessellated floor, patches of faint moonlight, just discernible, nothing more, telling of a glorious golden moon on high.

If it had not been for those coloured lamps and cross lights, Lance must have seen how ashen-white and rigid Miss Shore's face had grown. As it was, though her voice had startled him for the moment, it did not occur to him that anything ailed her more serious than a passing faintness, caused by the heat of the rooms and the prolonged waltz.

He opened the hall-door. It showed an outside picture of a garden drenched with moonlight, which set the seal of tawdriness at once upon the dazzling and illusive light indoors. He turned to take a cloak from a stand.

"It's a night to tempt even Midsummer fairies out of their acorn-cups," he said. "I don't believe that even in your sunny South you'd outshine such a moon as this."

There came no answer; he turned sharply to see if she were following.

There was at this end of the hall a narrow archway, half-draped by a curtain, which led to a second staircase leading to the upper floor. Neither this staircase nor the passage to it was lighted, and the archway showed a dark oblong in the light of the

hall. Just within it stood Miss Shore, her grey draperies fading into the shadowy dimness behind her. She was turning from him as if she wished to leave him without so much as a word of excuse or regret.

He sprang towards her. "You are not coming?" he cried in a disappointed tone.

"I am going to my room," she answered in the same stony, tuneless voice as before.

"You will come down again in a few minutes?" he pleaded.

With one foot on the first step of the staircase at the end of the passage, she waved her hand to him.

"Go back and dance," was all that she said.

If Eurydice, as she faded into the shadows whence she had emerged, had bidden Orpheus "go tune his lyre," it might have been in much such a voice, with much such a look in her eyes.

#### CHAPTER XXV.

LANCE went back to the ball-room, but not to dance. He made straight for Madge.

"Miss Shore is ill, I fear; will you go to her?" he whispered.

"I will send my maid at once," said Madge, promptly giving an order to that effect.

It was not far off midnight now. The doors of the supper-room were at that moment thrown open, and Madge was called upon to assist Lady Judith in the marshalling of her guests.

The dowager, who was placed under Lance's charge during what seemed to him an interminable repast, vowed that in all her experience of ball-suppers she had never before sat side by side with so singularly taciturn a young man.

Within an hour after supper Lady Brabazon and her party departed. This relieved Lady Judith of a large number of the more distinguished of her guests, and gave her leisure to discover how terribly she felt the heat, and how deliciously tempting was the thought of a feather-bed.

"I shall creep away quietly," she informed the lady by whose side she was sitting, in a voice that reached to the other end of the room. "I shan't be missed, Madge does the honours so well."

After the departure of the Brabazon party, the roll of carriage wheels in the

drive continued at intervals till daybreak. But long before the "orange light of widening morn" set the birds thinking of their matins, Madge found her appearance of feverish gaiety very hard to maintain. She fought her increasing lassitude vigorously, however, and did her best to keep up the brilliancy of the ball to its end.

Not so Lance, he played his part of a "son of the house" very badly indeed. Restless and ill at ease, he wandered aimlessly from room to room with so absent and discontented a look on his handsome face, that some of the young ladies who knew his dancing capabilities began to say hard things of him.

Madge caught sight of him once, as she flitted across the outer hall, speaking to her maid. She guessed in a moment what the subject of his enquiry must be.

"Is Miss Shore better?" she asked him, as the girl disappeared, her own curiosity on the matter not one whit less intense than his.

"She said she was all right, and desired the girl not to disturb her again," was Lance's reply; but for all that, he appeared far from satisfied on the matter, and he took no pains to hide the fact from any one.

The last hour of the ball tried Madge the most. As a rule, she took her balls very easily, danced but little, and vanished from the scene early with her dress nearly as fresh as when she put it on. But to-night mental and bodily fatigue had come hand in hand, and now at the eleventh hour the double strain became all but insupportable.

Sir Peter, blithe as a cricket, insisted on leading off "Sir Roger de Coverley" with her.

"Forty years' difference between us, my dear," he said gaily. "But for all that I don't feel like going out of the world yet!"

No, nor yet like going out of the ball-room, if that meant going to bed, for when Madge, at the bottom of the line of dancers, whispered to him, "I simply must go; I can't put one foot before another," he chose immediately the youngest partner he could find. And he kept the dance going with such spirit, that as one by one the couples, yielding to fatigue, disappeared to their rooms or to their carriages, the tired musicians whispered to each other that the old gentleman left bowing to the last young lady on the floor must be strung on wires, not muscles, for he seemed

as fresh at the end of the evening as he did at the beginning.

Madge, as she entered her dressing-room, dismissed her sleepy maid. Then she went on to her bedroom, and, too tired even to lift her hand to her head to remove the jewels from her hair, flung herself in her ball-dress on the bed. Her head ached and burned; her ears were filled with the twanging of the band, her eyes with pink light and dancing colours. But not the loudest of twanging music could shut out from her ears the echo of a startled voice with a piteous note in it, nor the most dazzling of light and colour shut out from her sight a rigid, ashen-white face, with a look of terror in its eyes.

The candles on the toilet-table had burned low; long straight lines of grey light came through the half-turned venetian blinds; the chill air of early morning swept in through a half-open window at the farther end of the room. Something seemed to stir and rustle in a large easy-chair, which was placed near this window with its back to the room.

What was it? Madge wondered, raising herself on one elbow and looking around her. Was it a breeze springing up and foretelling a storm, or had old Roy taken refuge in the room from the racket of the ball and curled himself up to sleep in the easy-chair?

She peered into the dimness curiously. It is wonderful how unlike itself in its noonday prettiness a sleeping-room will show in the half-light of dwindling candles and growing dawn. Shadows flickered across the ceiling, and seemed caught back again by invisible hands into the dark corners whence they had emerged. Thence they seemed to creep out once more to play hide-and-seek round the tables, and among the high-backed chairs.

Madge shaded her eyes with one hand. Was that a shadow rising slowly from the big easy-chair beside the window and approaching, not flickeringly, but with easy gliding motion?

Then a sudden chill fell upon her, as in that graceful gliding shape she recognised Miss Shore, clad, not in her ball-dress but in the grey travelling dress and beaver hat in which Madge had first seen her. Her heart failed her; she would have liked to shout aloud for help, but voice she had none.

Her hand failed her too, it was powerless even to ring the bell beside the bed. Nerveless and helpless, she sank back on her pillows, hiding her face in her hands.

Miss Shore's voice, low, clear, cold, told her that she stood beside her, leaned over her in fact.

"I have been waiting here to say good-bye to you," it said. "I have also a word to say beside good-bye if you will listen."

If she would listen! Madge felt that choice she had none, her feet would not have carried her across the floor had she essayed flight. This strange, wild girl, who had failed in an attempt at murder through chance, not want of purpose, must work her will now whatever it might be.

"You took me in a stranger; you gave me shelter and food—for that I thank you," she went on in the same low, cold monotone. "You turn me out into the night, into the darkness and loneliness—for that I thank you not—no, for that I hate you—I wish you evil."

Madge shrank farther back into her pillows.

Miss Shore resumed:

"When I am gone you will say, 'I have won! I have saved that man I love from an evil woman!'"

She broke off for a moment, then suddenly raised her voice to a passionate cry:

"Oh, you with your gold and your jewels, your home and your friends, are you the one to say 'this is evil, that is good'? You are what you were made to be, you call that good; I am what I was made to be, you call that evil!"

Again she broke off, and now her voice sank to its former low, cold monotone. "But I did not come here to tell you this. No, I came to say to you, 'you have won so far!' I go back into the darkness and loneliness whence I came, you will stay here in the light and the happiness. You will win back the love you have lost; you will say, 'I have conquered.' Wait! At the very moment of your victory I will stand between you and your joy, as you have stood between me and mine."

Madge heard no more. Worn out with the heavy strain of the past twenty-four hours, her senses left her.

And outside, the grey expanse of heaven was broken up into a hundred massive, rugged clouds, to let out the rainbow glories of the morning; the great plumed trees waved in the summer breeze, and a whole orchestra of wild birds broke into their hallelujah chorus, as if desolation, despair, and death were words without meaning in so fair a scheme of creation!

## CHAPTER XXVI.

VERY few of the guests made their appearance at the breakfast-table on the morning after the ball. Sir Peter and one or two of the most youthful of the party had things very much to themselves until close upon the luncheon hour. Madge sent down a message that she had a very bad headache, and was reserving her strength for the villagers' sports in the afternoon and tenants' supper in the evening.

These sports and the supper formed the staple topic of talk among the house party until another item of news was announced, which altogether put these into the shade—nothing less than the sudden disappearance of Miss Shore. It was not until nearly noon that her flight was discovered. The discovery was made through Lance's instrumentality. He had sent Madge's maid, about breakfast time, to make enquiries as to the young lady's health, and to present on his part a nosegay of freshly-gathered forget-me-nots. The maid came back with her flowers, saying that Miss Shore was sleeping and did not wish to be disturbed.

This was her version of the fact that her repeated knockings brought no response.

Lance waited awhile impatiently, grew discontented with his fading forget-me-nots, and gathering a nosegay of exotics, went himself to the housekeeper—a somewhat important personage in the establishment—and commissioned her to present them herself to Miss Shore, with enquiries from him as to whether she felt rested from her fatigues of overnight. Evidently he had not the slightest wish to conceal his anxiety on the young lady's behalf.

The housekeeper came back in a few minutes looking rather scared, and bringing the startling news that, not receiving any response to her rappings at Miss Shore's door, she had ventured to turn the handle and look in, when, to her great surprise, she found that the room was empty and that the bed had not been slept in.

Lance, for a few seconds, refused to trust his own powers of hearing. Then, after desiring the housekeeper to go to Sir Peter and report the fact to him, he made straight for Madge's room.

Madge, in her loose peignoir, opened her door to his summons. She knew well enough what lay behind it, and he, if he had not been so preoccupied with his own

thoughts, must have seen how white and haggard she looked.

Ten words told her the story.

"Do you know anything I don't know, Madge?" he queried impatiently; "did you see her after you left the ball-room, or did she send you a message?"

Madge evaded his questions.

"Let us go to her room. She may have left a letter or written message," she said, herself trembling at the bare thought of the possibility of such a thing.

At the door of Miss Shore's room they were met by Sir Peter, bent on a like errand. The three entered the room together.

They found that the bed, as the housekeeper had stated, had not been slept in. On it was flung carelessly the ball-dress of overnight, strewn with sundry faded sprigs of stephanotis, which had been worn with it. A small portmanteau stood open beside the bed, with its contents tossed about as if some things had been hastily abstracted. On the toilette table glittered the gold—to its last half-sovereign—which Madge had paid on the previous morning for the pictures; but never note or written message of any sort with all their searching could they discover.

The gold caught Sir Peter's eye.

"Ah, that's a good sign. She must have had plenty of money in her purse or she wouldn't have left that behind," he said cheerily. "Depend upon it we shall get a letter from her in the course of the day explaining—"

"Madge," interrupted Lance in an odd, quiet tone, "do you mind looking through that portmanteau and seeing if there are any letters there, or anything that will give us a clue to her people or friends?"

Madge immediately complied. One by one she carefully turned over the contents of the portmanteau. It was a fruitless search. The box contained nothing save articles of clothing, most of them unmarked; but one or two embroidered with the name "Eelka."

Madge related the circumstance of a handkerchief being found with the same name upon it.

Sir Peter's eyes grew round and rounder.

"Most extraordinary—" he began.

Lance interrupted him:

"Of course you will at once communicate with the police and offer a reward for information of any sort?"

A sudden impulse seized Madge. "Don't



let that be done," she said in low, nervous tones, addressing Lance. "Whatever else you do, don't do that."

Lance stared at her blankly.

"Why not? What else on earth are we to do? Of course, I shall start for Lower Upton at once, and follow up any clue I may get there; but the police would do more in a day than I should do in a week."

"My dear boy," cried Sir Peter, aghast, "you mustn't dream of such a thing. Let Stubbs go." He broke off for a moment. "Ah, by the way, he can't, he's off already to Carstairs—had a telegram late last night—so he told me this morning." Here he turned to Madge: "A very dear friend of his at Carstairs had been suddenly taken seriously ill, and wished to see him."

Madge said nothing; only she grew white and whiter, and her eyes drooped.

"But it is easy enough to send some one else to make enquiries"—here he turned to Lance: "Your servant is a trusty fellow, send him—but I couldn't get on without you to-day at all—you'll have to be umpire in all the races and the vaulting and jumping——"

Lance gave him one look. It said:

"Talk of such things to a man whose soul is on the rack!"

But his lips said only:

"I'm afraid you'll have to get some one else to act umpire. I start for Lower Upton at once!" and he left the room as he spoke.

Madge followed him hastily into the outside gallery.

"Lance," she said, in the same low, earnest tones as before, "let her go! Be advised! Don't set the police on her track; don't hunt her down yourself."

He stared at her stonily.

"For her sake, if not for your own," she implored.

His face grew pale as death. This was clothing with a body a spectre of dread that more than once before had stood in his path.

"For her sake!" he repeated hoarsely. "Madge, if you know anything about her that I don't know, tell me at once—do you hear?—at once, and be done with it."

Madge was silent. When she had laid her plot she had not taken thought for such a contingency as this, so was unprepared to meet it. After all, she was a bad plotter, and was acting very much on the spur of the moment now.

"Come, Madge, speak out," he said; and now his voice grew stern and peremptory.

Still Madge was silent. If she were to tell him the story the newspaper paragraph told, he might be quick enough to discover the source of her inspiration for the mirror picture, and might hate her for ever for the deed she had done.

He stood still, waiting for her answer.

She clasped her hands together once more. "I beg—I entreat——" she began.

"No, not that," he interrupted. "Give me a reason—a simple, straightforward reason why I am not to go in search of this young lady—a guest in our house, with every claim to our courtesy."

A reason, a simple, straightforward reason! She could have given him one had she dared. "My love; is not that reason enough?" she would have liked to cry out of her full breaking heart. "The love that led me to sacrifice myself in a hateful marriage; the love that is making me do unworthy things now; the love that will send me to my grave should you choose this young woman or any other but me for your wife!"

A hot rush of tears came to her eyes. She stumbled forward and clung to his arm.

"Lance, Lance," she cried passionately, "I can't give you a reason. There is one—a strong one——"

"Give it me," he interrupted doggedly. "It is all I ask of you."

"It would be impossible!" she cried, her tears almost choking her. She broke off for a moment, and then her voice rose to a loud passionate cry. "Oh, Lance, Lance, will you not trust me after all these years of—of companionship? It is not of myself I am thinking now—not of Miss Shore even—only of you. I beg—I implore you, let her go, or your life, your whole life, may be wrecked."

Something in her tone startled him. If his heart had not been full of the thoughts of another woman, he must have heard the cry of wounded love in this one's voice.

As it was, he only thought that she was strangely excited, and was using language which she was not warranted in using.

He tried to disengage his arm from her clasp. "You are talking wildly, Madge; be reasonable."

His words stung her. Yet she clung to his arm.

"Is it unreasonable to implore you to

think of your life in the future—to try to save you from the wiles of an evil woman——”

Here he coldly and firmly released his arm from her clasp.

“That will do, Madge—you’ve said enough for one day,” he said sternly.

As if struck by a sudden thought, he went back to the room they had just quitted, and came out again in a few seconds with one or two of the sprays of the dead stephanotis in his hand. Then, without another word to or look at Madge, he went.

She stood staring after him through her blinding tears. This was the man whom she had accused of treating life as a jest, and of never being in earnest from year’s end to year’s end! Well, he was desperately—it might be fatally—in earnest now, not a doubt.

### THE DEVEREUX.

“YES, I know,” says Dry-as-dust, “but it’s all a myth. Lord John Thynne used to show the very ring, did he? Well, Clarendon, writing in 1641, is the first to mention the ring story, and he rejects it as ‘a loose report.’ Manningham, who was keeping a diary in 1600, does indeed refer to a ring; but his ring is one given to Elizabeth by Essex, and by her worn till her death. No; the ring story comes from ‘A Romance of the Most Renowned Queen and her Great Favourite,’ published in 1650, and republished again and again in the eighteenth century. It was dramatised; and the *Sieur Aubery du Maurier* reprinted it in French; and Lady Elizabeth Spelman got over the difficulty of Essex entrusting such a precious token to the wife of his deadly enemy, by saying—on the authority of her ancestor, Sir R. Carey—that Essex told his ‘boy’ to give it to Lady Scrope, the Countess of Nottingham’s sister, and that the stupid fellow gave it to the wrong sister. Anyhow, the story is apocryphal; Ranke has declared against it.”

Well, I will stick to it, nevertheless; and I think most of my readers will prefer the persistent English tradition to the scepticism of the German historian. I do and will believe that the ring went wrong; and that the Queen, maddened at the loss of her cousin and prime favourite, did give the Countess a most unqueenly shaking, crying out in her agony, “God

may forgive you, but I never shall.” It was a murder; and the murder, too, of a man of old blood; for the Devereux—d’Evreux, from that bright Norman town with the pretty little flamboyant Cathedral full of splendid stained glass—really came in with the Conqueror, and got a slice of land on the Welsh border, in Hereford. There was a Devereux—Sir John, the second Lord—who went with Du Guesclin to Spain, on that romantic expedition which expelled the hated Pedro the Cruel. But the Black Prince came in, and Pedro’s gold outweighed the prayers of the Spaniards. So the Prince declared against Henry of Trastannare, and called Devereux and Du Guesclin’s other English volunteers to join him, their liege lord. By-and-by Devereux was Governor of the Limousin, and was with the Prince at the sack of Limoges.

In 1461 a Devereux married Lord Ferrers’s heiress, and though he died fighting for Richard at Bosworth, his son by Cecily, co-heiress of Bouchier, Earl of Essex, became Lord Ferrers of Chartley, and by-and-by Viscount Hereford. He was a sailor-officer, commanding the *Imperyall Carrik*, one of Henry the Eighth’s big ships; and his grandson Walter, after some squabbling with Leicester, got the Queen to grant him a large piece of Ulster, and, more marvellous still, to undertake to find half the army for conquering it. She also lent him ten thousand pounds, a large sum for that day, but took care to secure a first mortgage on some of his estates. His grandmother was a daughter of Grey, Marquis of Dorset, so that he was the Queen’s kinsman; but she insisted, nevertheless, that if the money was not repaid in three years, the estates should be hers. Essex had great hopes; Carew, the Norrises, and Lord Rich joined him. Ireland was nearer than America; and, though there was no gold, there was land and cattle, and “natives” who might be made to work for Englishmen, as the Spaniard was making the West Indians work for him. But the Ulster Irish were not so unwarlike as the Indians; and Essex was soon in the same plight as the man who sold the living bear’s skin. Of course he sowed dissension among the clans; the O’Neil, whom the English had made Baron Dungannon, joined him; so did another O’Neil, Sir Brian MacPhelim. But the head O’Neil, Tirlough Luineach, elected successor of Shane, was not to be caught by the shallow pretence that Essex

had only come to drive the Scots out of Antrim, and stood on his defence. The volunteers, who had not expected hard knocks, began to go home; and, defeated in a raid into Tirlough's country, Essex felt he must make a new money arrangement, and begged Elizabeth to take two hundred and fifty pounds a year in land in discharge of the ten thousand. She would not let him off his bond, and his debt to her hung as a burden about his son. But she sent him a few men, with whom he waited about in Carrickfergus till disease had reduced his army to two hundred. He was then glad to escape to the Pale, having played a hero's part in sharing his men's sufferings, spending his nights in rooms full of the dead and dying, but having done nothing towards planting his colony. Later in the year (1574), having got the O'Donnells to side with him against the rival clan, he made a raid into Tyrone, "carefully burning all the O'Neils' corn" and massacring such old men, women, and children as could not escape him. This partly satisfied the Queen, who was anxious that "something should be done;" and its cruelty was a matter of course. His next exploit, however, surpassed even the usual limit of "Irish atrocities." He wanted to make an example of somebody, and Sir Brian MacPhelim was the only chief who was friendly enough to accept an invitation. So a rich feast was prepared at Belfast, at which Brian, his wife, and brother, and retainers were royally banqueted. Suddenly Essex's soldiers rushed in and slew every Irish guest save the chief, his wife, and brother. They were taken to Dublin, hanged and quartered. Essex trusted that "this little execution hath broken the faction, and made them all afraid." But it did not make them more anxious to place themselves under English government; and Deputy Fitzwilliam at last persuaded Elizabeth to order Essex home.

Something, however, he would do before evacuating Ulster, and as the Antrim Scots were really worse enemies, because more stubborn than the Irish, he determined with the help of the latter to drive them out. Marching himself by land, he sent Norris with three ships—one commanded by Drake—to Rathlin Island, where the chief of the Scots had sent for safety the women and children. For four days the place held out against Norris's guns. Then it surrendered on terms, which were broken, as they had been by Lord Grey

and Raleigh some years before, when Fort del Ore, near Dingle, capitulated. The defenders—almost all old men, the clan being on the mainland looking out for Essex—were killed, and then the women and children were hunted (and smoked) out of the caves in which they had taken refuge, and all slaughtered.

The Queen regarded this exploit with special gratification. Mr. Froude quotes the despatches which testify to her joy. This was Essex's last achievement. With his gore-dripping laurels he went over to London, and, despite the sinister influence of Burghley, got his Irish estates confirmed by the Queen, who also made him Earl Marshal of Ireland.

He was not happy at home; for his wife, Lettice Knollys, after more than twelve years of marriage, fell in love with the Earl of Leicester, whom she married less than two years after Essex's death. Kind people, of course, said he had been poisoned.

His son Robert, a delicate and precocious boy, succeeded, his grandfather Knollys told him, "to lands insufficient to maintain the state of the poorest Earl in England." While at Cambridge, he was actually driven to complain to his guardian Burghley that he had not enough of decent clothes for his use. Before this, when ten years old, he had been brought to Court, where, as the Queen's cousin, he insisted on wearing his hat in her presence. She, on the same plea of cousinship, wanted to kiss him, but he stoutly refused; and it was not till ten years after that his stepfather persuaded him to reappear at Court, hoping to use his "goodly person"—he had grown up very handsome—as a counterpoise to Raleigh. His bravery at Zutphen had made him popular; and it was soon said of Elizabeth:

"Nobody is with her but my Lord Essex; and at night my Lord is at cards or one game or another with her, that he cometh not to his own lodging till birds sing in the morning."

Yet already he began to show his temper. When the Queen ill-treated his sister "to please that knave Raleigh," he left the house where both were staying and rode to Sandwich, resolved to go back to Holland, and hardly yielding to the remonstrances of Sir R. Carey, whom Elizabeth sent to appease him. He got jealous of Blount, afterwards Lord Mountjoy, and husband of one of his sisters. Blount was wearing on his sleeve a gold chess-queen, given him by the Queen.

"Now I perceive every fool must wear a favour," growled Essex, and a duel was the result.

"By God's death," remarked Elizabeth, "it were fitting some one should take him down and teach him better manners, or there were no rule with him."

Never happy at Court, Essex escaped in 1588, and sailed in the *Swiftsure* for Portugal, leaving Norris and Drake to follow. But, though he was first ashore, wading through the surf; and then, riding up to the gates of Lisbon, challenged any of the Spanish garrison to single combat; he went back as soon as he got Elizabeth's peremptory order for his return. Poor fellow! she wanted the three thousand pounds that she had lent him; and he had to sell one of his manors to satisfy her. Cecil had begun to thwart him; and his secret marriage with Sir Philip Sidney's widow, Walsingham's daughter, made the Queen furious. Essex shunned the storm by going over to help Henry of Navarre against the League.

At last the Queen sent for him. They had a week of "jollity and feasting," and she wept when, under strict injunctions to avoid all personal risk, he went back to his command. He had with him his Chartley tenants, and knighted nearly two dozen of them—this was one of the counts in the indictment on which, by-and-by, he was condemned to death. Home again, he fell in with Francis Bacon, a struggling barrister, who thought himself ill-used by the Cecils. Bacon advised him to give up foreign wars, and "secure domestical greatness." Essex tried hard to get his new friend made Attorney or Solicitor-General; and, failing in both, he gave him land at Twickenham, worth one thousand five hundred pounds. Bacon's brother, Anthony, became his secretary, and Essex House soon rivalled the Foreign Office in the quality and quantity of its intelligence. It was from information received that Essex was able to warn Elizabeth of the plot to poison her, in which her Jew physician, Roderigo Lopez, was the chief agent. The whole thing is obscure; for there was absolutely no reason for Lopez's treachery, and Elizabeth was quite justified in calling her informant "a rash and temerarious youth;" but Essex brought such proofs that, plot or no plot, Lopez was put to death. This drew Elizabeth closer to Essex, and in 1556, he was allowed to sail against Spain, which had just taken Calais, and seemed generally formidable.

The Queen took leave of him in a pathetic letter, and sent him a prayer of her own making. Just before sailing he showed his unselfishness by writing several letters to try to get Bacon the Mastership of the Rolls.

His aim was threefold: to cripple Spain by capturing the Indies' fleet, to harry her coasts, and by seizing Cadiz to "leave a thorn in her side." Even here Essex was thwarted; the council of war appointed Raleigh to lead the attack on Cadiz; and Essex had to content himself with thrusting his ship, the *Ark Royal*, close to Raleigh's. At last he got leave to do what he had wished to do at first—make a land attack with three thousand men; he dashed at the Spanish soldiers and drove all before him into Cadiz market-place. The town surrendered, and next day the citadel. "The Earl," wrote Raleigh to Cecil, "hath behaved himself both valiantly and advisedly in the highest degree; without pride, without favour; and hath gotten great favour and much love of all." Yet it was surely ill-advised to allow pillage, and lay the blame on the Dutch allies; and to have seized at Faro the library of Osorio, the learned Bishop of Algarve, was hardly atoned for by presenting it to the Bodleian.

The main objects of the expedition were lost; Cadiz was not retained; and, though Essex begged to be allowed to stay behind with twelve ships, the treasure-fleet was not waited for. It sailed into the Tagus two days after the English had gone home. As it was, the prizes were only valued at thirteen thousand pounds. Elizabeth grumbled, and with characteristic meanness boggled over the distribution of the money.

But Essex was the hero of the hour; sermons were preached in his praise, amid the applause which in that day greeted popular sermons; his popularity "made the old fox Burghley to crouch and whine," though Cecil, now Queen's Secretary, was as ill-disposed as ever, and said, "I am more braved by him than ever I was by any one in my life." And now Bacon, who had probably already gone over to the side of the Cecils, began plying Essex with advice. He was to give up military ambition; to remove the impression of his being self-opinionated; to disguise his feelings; to yield his personal likings at the Queen's will—all very easy for a cold, crafty nature like Bacon's, but wholly impossible for Essex, unless he was to become other than himself.

Then came the ill-fated Azores expedition,



on sailing for which he wrote to the Queen in terms of adulation excessive even for that time, and Cecil replied: "The Queen is now so disposed to have us all love you, as she and I do every night talk like angels of you."

What with storms and restrictions in the sealed orders, the fleet did nothing. Raleigh parted company, and took Fayal, a feat which Essex had reserved for himself. A reprimand to Raleigh from the council of war must have been poor consolation to his chief for being done out of the one little success of the expedition, for the treasure-fleet sailed by in the night, and though the English pursued, they only captured four heavily-laden merchantmen. Essex landed at Saint Michael's, where nothing could be got but oranges, and sailed home, saved from a large Spanish fleet that was way-laying him by the same storms which had harassed him all through. The Queen received him coldly, reproaching him for unkindness to Raleigh, and touching him where he was most sensitive by making Lord Howard of Effingham Earl of Nottingham, "for his services at Cadiz." This was certainly unfair, for whatever glory was gained at Cadiz was due to Essex. He was the more galled because the new Earl, being High Admiral, took precedence of other Earls, even of him who by two descents was kin to Royalty. Essex sulked, and called for a trial by combat between Nottingham, or any of his sons, and himself, and when Elizabeth heard about it, she took his part. Burghley, she said, had misled her, and her cousin was quite right in being indignant at the loss of position. She tried to make Nottingham yield the "pas," and when he declined, she made Essex Earl-Marshal, and thus secured him precedence after all. Did this encourage him to turn his back soon after on the Queen in the Council? Not only so, but, if Raleigh is to be believed, he said: "Your conditions are as crooked as your carcase." Elizabeth gave him a violent box on the ears, crying: "Go and be hanged, you unmannerly knave!" Then he put his hand to his sword, and said he would not brook such treatment from her father. How far the story is garbled we know not; Raleigh was sure to make the worst of anything Essex might do; and three months after he received a formal pardon, protesting all the while that the Queen had nothing to complain of, and that he was the injured party.

And now came the turning point of his life. "Study Ireland," said Bacon, his evil genius; and so when the crushing defeat of Bagenal by Hugh O'Neil made it needful to send over troops and a good General, he would go, though he felt that failure was almost certain, and though the eagerness of the Cecils to ship him off ought to have warned him. He was as pleased as a boy at having almost sovereign power and an army of eighteen thousand men; but the Dublin Council, doubtless moved by Cecil, at once began thwarting him. His plan—the best—was to dash at once into Ulster. "No," they said, "you can't victual your army there." So precious time was lost in a military parade through the South.

At Arklow, where alone there was any fighting, his new troops did not stand fire; and as he returned he was attacked by Rory O'More in what the Irish call "the pass of plumes," from the number of gallants whose feathers were scattered in the skirmish.

After decimating the troops that had been beaten at Arklow, and shooting Piers Walsh, one of their officers, Essex at last marched north with four thousand men, all he had left. Elizabeth pursued him with scolding letters; first he was making too many knights; next she protested against Sir Christopher Blount, his mother's third husband, being on his council; worst of all, he had made Southampton master of his horse, although the fellow had secretly married a maid of honour, a far worse sin in Elizabeth's eyes than "compromising" half-a-dozen of them.

Now Hugh O'Neil had been brought up at the English Court, and was in all respects the very opposite of the typical Ulster chieftain. He had been made Earl of Tyrone, and was cultured after the peculiar Tudor fashion. So when he had persuaded Essex to meet him quite alone, each riding his horse six yards into the river which sundered their armies, Essex may well have thought:

"What quarrel has England with this man? He only wants his rights, as I should in his case." And at a second meeting peace was arranged, even freedom of worship being granted to "Papists," though Essex chafed O'Neil about his insistence on this point. "Thou carest as much for religion as my horse here."

Tyrone undertook to force the lesser chiefs to accept England's suzerainty, and to bring over also his great rival, O'Donnell; and Essex "went to take